

## **John Hunter: 250th anniversary celebrations**

---

Throughout the week in which fell the 250th anniversary of the birth of John Hunter on the night of 13th–14th February 1728 the Inner Hall of the College was dominated by the image of John Hunter as recreated by the sculptor Nigel Boonham and in the statue by Henry Weekes that was erected by public subscription in 1864. Nigel Boonham's work was the plaster cast for the bronze statue to be placed by the College in Lincoln's Inn Fields to commemorate both the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 and the 250th anniversary

of Hunter's birth (see *Annals*, March 1978, p 151).

This dual ascription had seemed the more appropriate in that the principal event of the week was to be a reception on Hunter's birthday for Fellows and Patrons of the College at which Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh had graciously consented to be present. In the event both were unfortunately confined to Buckingham Palace through illness, but the College was fortunate and grateful that the Prince of



*Mr Bari Logan, Prosector, of the Department of Anatomy, explains to Prince Charles, the President, and Professor McMinn how the commemorative paperweights had been made from the Tassie medallion. Prince Charles is holding the first of the limited edition, which was presented to Her Majesty the Queen.*



*At the reception. Prince Charles talking to the Dean of the Faculty of Dental Surgery and Mrs Liddelow together with the Vice-Presidents, Mr Selwyn Taylor (right) and Professor Gordon Robson.*

*Prince Charles signs the Visitors' Book in the Hunterian Museum for Miss Elizabeth Allen, the Curator, watched by Sir Leonard and Lady Wolfson and Sir Hedley Atkins.*





*The President and Council, preceded by the Mace Bearer, Mr Harding, enter Lincoln's Inn for the Anniversary Oration.*

Wales was able to take their place at exceedingly short notice.

On arrival Prince Charles was greeted by the President and Mrs Murley; the Vice-Presidents and the Deans of the two Faculties were then presented to him, with their wives, beside the Weekes statue, the President explaining how this epitomised the constitutional equality of surgery, dental surgery, and anaesthetics in the College that had been recognised in the new Charter granted by Her Majesty the Queen last year. Moving on into the Council Room, Prince Charles talked informally with Honorary Fellows and Patrons—including such welcome guests as the Presidents of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the American College of Surgeons, and the International Federation of Surgical Colleges and the immediate Past President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada—before going into the Edward Lumley Hall to meet

and talk to the Fellows and their wives or husbands and other guests who had assembled there.

On leaving the Hall the President pointed out the Foundation Stone of the rebuilt College that was laid by the Queen in 1953 and showed His Royal Highness the mallet used both on that occasion and when Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone of the old Examination Hall on the Embankment in 1886. The Prince was then taken to the Hunterian Museum, where the Hunterian Trustees and the Conservators and Curator were presented. As a memento of the occasion the Prince accepted on behalf of the Queen the first of the commemorative paperweights derived from the Tassie medallion of Hunter, of which two hundred and fifty were made by the College Prosector for sale as souvenirs of the anniversary. A bouquet for Her Majesty, made by the Secretary of the British Orthopaedic Association, was subsequently delivered to Buckingham Palace and accepted by the Queen. Music for the occasion was provided by the band and trumpeters of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Prince Charles's interest in what he saw and his informal friendliness made this a happy and memorable evening for everyone fortunate enough to be present.

The following day the Treasurer of Lincoln's Inn kindly repeated the hospitality offered by one of his predecessors in 1900, when the granting of a new Charter was celebrated by a banquet held in the Hall of Lincoln's Inn and attended by the then Prince of Wales, recently elected the first Honorary Fellow of the College, and other distinguished guests. In 1978 that Hall was the scene of the Hunterian Anniversary Oration by the Rt Hon. the Lord Wolfenden CBE on 'Hunter, Hippocrates, and Humanity'—a superb piece of oratory that was greatly appreciated by a distinguished audience representing the professions and other important elements in our national life, many of those present wearing full evening dress and decorations in readiness for the banquet that followed in the Great Hall of the College itself. The toast to the College was proposed at this occasion by the President of the Law Society, Mr Richard K Denby, and the response was given by the President of the College, who also



*The procession leaving the College. Behind the President and the two Vice-Presidents are Dr Frank Stinchfield, President of the American College of Surgeons, Sir Edward Hughes, President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Professor Robert Salter, immediate Past President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, and Lord Porritt.*

welcomed the many distinguished guests. The toast to the Orator was proposed by Mr Selwyn Taylor, Vice-President, and Lord Wolfenden replied.

For the remainder of the week the College reverted to something more like its normal workaday self and to matters that would perhaps have been closer to the heart of Hunter. On the Thursday a symposium on 'Inflammation', organised by the Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, attracted a large audience. The following day there was again a good attendance of Fellows at the symposium on 'The scientific basis of the management of injury, wounds, and ulcers in the

twentieth century', arranged for the College's celebrations by the Surgical Research Society. The subjects of both symposia were chosen because these were topics to which Hunter himself had made important original contributions when scientific surgery was in its infancy. Fellows will remember that today they are still bidden at the time of their admission to the College 'to cultivate the science as well as the practice of surgery' (or of dental surgery or anaesthesia).

The final event of the week was the Faculty of Dental Surgery's Webb-Johnson Lecture, delivered by a past-Dean of the Faculty, Mr B W Fickling CBE FRCS FDSRCS, on 'The

*Members of Council in procession from the College to Lincoln's Inn to hear Lord Wolfenden deliver the Anniversary Oration.*





*The banquet in the Edward Lumley Hall*

marches of dentistry', followed by a reception given by the Dean and Board of Faculty.

Apart from the events in the College itself that have been referred to in this brief account, commemorative events were also organised by the Hunterian Society, whose Oration at the Mansion House on 13th February was delivered by the President of the College, Mr Reginald Murley, on 'Some contemporaries of John Hunter', and by St George's Hospital, which mounted an interesting exhibition of Hunteriana that are still in the possession of Hunter's own hospital.

John Hunter's Museum and the Odontological Collection were of course a focal point of the celebrations. The Curator of the Hunterian Museum, Miss Elizabeth Allen, was responsible for special displays that included material loaned by the Hunterian Society. The College Departments of Dental Science, Anaesthetics, and Ophthalmological Research also put on displays of some of their work during the last two days of the week.

HAZEL CHILD

Assistant Secretary of the College